

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 004978

LIMDIS

FOL REPEAT KINSHASA 0065 ACTION SECSTATE DTD 5 JAN.

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 0065

LIMDIS

ALSO FOR AID/W

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, PINS, AO, CG

SUBJECT: US CONCERN FOR CABINDAN REFUGEES IN ZAIRE

REF: A) 76HSTATE 303139

B) 76 KINSHASA 10536

C) KINSHASA 0024

1. SUMMARY. REFERENCES B AND C DESCRIBED THE DESPERATE PLIGHT OF
THE REFUGEES. THIS TELEGRAM ADDRESSES THE QUESTION OF POSSIBLE US
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INVOLVEMENT IN REFUGEE RELIEF. END SUMMARY.

2. SITUATION. THE CABINDAN REFUGEES IN BAS ZAIRE ARE SUFFERING
FROM SERIOUS LACK OF FOOD, MEDICINES AND CLOTHING. WHILE LIMITED
CHURCH ASSISTANCE IS AVAILABLE TO THE REFUGEES, NO ORGANIZATION
HAS AS YET COMMITTED ITSELF TO A MAJOR RELIEF EFFORT. THE UNHCR
IN KINSHASA HAS REFUSED TO BECOME INVOLVED IN REFUGEE RELIEF ALONG

THE BORDER AREA DUE TO POLITICAL FACTORS.

3. ESTIMATES OF THE NUMBER OF REFUGEES VARY FROM 20,000 TO 50,000. WEH HAVE NO FIRM FIGURES FOR THE TOTAL POPULATION OF CABINDA BEFORE THE CIVIL WAR BUT BELIEVE IT TO HAVE BEEN LESS THAN 100,000. AMONG PRESENT REFUGEES, THERE ARE AN UNDETERMINED NUMBER OF FLEC LEADERS AND SOLDIERS. FLEC LEADERS HAVE REQUESTED ARMS, FOOD, AND CLOTHING; FLEC SOLDIERS ARE OPERATING ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER.

4. IMPLICATIONS OF US REFUGEE ASSISTANCE. WHILE IT IS CLEAR THAT THE USG CANNOT BECOME INVOLVED IN SUPPORT FOR FLEC, HUMANITARIAN FACTORS DICTATE CONCERN FOR REFUGEES. EMBASSY CAN SEND OFFICERS TO THE AREA TO ASSESS THE SITUATION, BUT IN VIEW OF FULL REPORT OF IRC REPRESENTATIVES (REF C), THIS WOULD SEEM UNNECESSARY. ALSO AN OFFICIAL AMERICAN MISSION TO THE AREA WOULD RISK IMPLYING TO GOZ AND REFUGEES THAT WE ARE PREPARED TO PROVIDE DIRECT ASSISTANCE.

5. DEPARTMENT SHOULD NOTE THAT DIRECT AMERICAN ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES MAY BE MISINTERPRETED AS SUPPORT FOR FLEC AND COULD COMPLICATE US RELATIONS WITH ZAIRE AND COMPOUND DIFFICULTIES WITH ANGOLA. GOZ, FOR ITS PART, HAS PROVIDED LITTLE ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES AND HAS BEEN CAREFUL RECENTLY TO PROVIDE NO OVERT MILITARY SUPPORT TO FLEC.

6. RECOMMENDATION: AS THE UNHCR IS NOT ACTIVE IN THE AREA, THE USG SHOULD CONSIDER CHANNELLING REFUGEE ASSISTANCE THROUGH PRIVATE VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS CATHOLIC OR PROTESTANT CHURCHES OR THE INTER-CONFIDENTIAL

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NATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE, IF THE LATTER COMMITS ITSELF TO A PROGRAM IN BAS ZAIRE. WE HAVE FULL CONFIDENCE IN THE PROFESSIONAL ABILITY OF WEISNER AND ERJAVEC WHO HAVE REPRESENTED IRC HERE AND FEEL THEY WOULD AVOID INVOLVEMENT WITH FLEC'S OPERATIONAL ARM. CUTGER

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Message Attributes

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